

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 /069 W

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6749

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMCONSUL MADRAS

CINCPAC

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJECT: COMMUNIST PARTY WITHDRAWS FROM GOVERNMENT

REF: COLOMBO 0609

1. SUMMARY: COMMUNIST PARTY (CP) ANNOUNCED FEBRUARY 19 THAT IT WAS LEAVING THE RULING UNITED FRONT COALITION. HOUSING MINISTER PIETER KEUNEMAN AND DEPUTY EDUCATION MINISTER B.Y. TUDAWA--THE TWO CP CABINET MEMBERS--HAVE SUBMITTED THEIR RESIGNATIONS. IN LONG EXPLANATORY STATEMENT, CP CENTRAL COMMITTEE CRITICIZED RIGHTIST ELEMENTS OF PM BANDARANAIKE'S SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) FOR THEIR ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH A MIXED, RATHER THAN PURELY SOCIALIST, ECONOMY. THE TROTSKYITE LANKA SAMA SAMAJA PARTY (LSSP) CAME IN FOR CRITICISM TOO ALTHOUGH THE CP'S STRONGEST WORDS WERE RESERVED FOR THE UNITED NATIONAL PARTY (UNP), "THE PRINCIPAL ENEMY OF THE WORKING CLASS." THE CP CALLED FOR A BROAD ALLIANCE OF PROGRESSIVE FORCES TO COMBAT THE UNP AND SLFP RIGHT-WING. IT PROMISED TO SUPPORT THE

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GOVERNMENT ON ANY DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS WHICH ARE "IN THE INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE." SLFP, LAST REMAINING ELEMENT OF THREE-PARTY UNITED FRONT ESTABLISHED IN 1968, RETAINS A MAJORITY IN NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY (NSA). END SUMMARY.

2. AS HAD BEEN PREDICTED FOR THE PAST WEEK (REFTEL), SRI

LANKA'S MOSCOW-WING COMMUNIST PARTY ANNOUNCED FEB. 19 THAT IT WAS WITHDRAWING IMMEDIATELY FROM THE GOVERNING UNITED FRONT COALITION OF PM SIRIMAVO BANDARANAIKE. THE COALITION, FORMED IN 1968 BETWEEN THE SLFP, LSSP, AND CP, NOW CONSISTS ONLY OF THE SLFP, WHICH WAS STUNG BY FIVE DEFECTIONS FROM ITS OWN RANKS TWO WEEKS AGO. THE TWO CP CABINET MEMBERS--HOUSING MINISTER PEITER KEUNEMAN AND DEPUTY EDUCATION MINISTER B.Y. TUDAWE-- HAVE RESIGNED AND THEY ALONG WITH THE FOUR OTHER ELECTED CP M.P.'S WILL NOW SIT AS AN INDEPENDENT GROUP IN THE NSA, IF IT SHOULD MEET AGAIN BEFORE ELECTIONS. THEY WILL PROBABLY BE JOINED BY ONE OF THE SIX M.P.'S APPOINTED UNDER THE PRE-1972 CONSTITUTION, M.C. SUBRAMANIAM, A LONG-TIME CP MEMBER, FOR A TOTAL STRENGTH OF SEVEN.

3. THE CP CENTRAL COMMITTEE ISSUED A LONG STATEMENT, SETTING OUT ITS RATIONALE FOR WITHDRAWAL AND ITS HOPES FOR THE FUTURE. WHILE PRAISING THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE UNITED FRONT DURING ITS NEARLY SEVEN YEARS IN POWER, THE STATEMENT CRITICIZED THE SLFP RIGHT-WING FOR ITS ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH A MIXED ECONOMY, RATHER THAN A PURE SOCIALIST ONE. SPECIFICALLY, THE EFFORTS OF "RIGHT-WING CIRCLES" TO GAIN "LEGAL GUARANTEES FOR , AND AN OPEN DOOR POLICY TOWARDS, FOREIGN PRIVATE CAPITALIST INVESTMENT"-- A REFERENCE TO THE FINANCE MINISTER'S PROPOSAL FOR A FOREIGN INVESTMENT GUARANTEES ACT-- CAME UNDER HEAVY CRITICISM. OTHER, MORE RECENT, DEVELOPMENTS WHICH THE STATEMENT CLAIMED HAD LET TO THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CP'S DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE SLFP RIGHT WING INCLUDED THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE UNIVERSITY BILL LAST NOVEMBER WHICH WERE STRENUOUSLY OPPOSED BY STUDENT AND FACULTY, THE GOVERNMENT'S OPPOSITION TO THE DECEMBER/JANUARY STRIKES, AND THE RECENT PROROGATION OF THE NSA WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OR APPROVAL OF THE CP.

4. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WENT ON TO CASTIGATE THE UNP AS THE "PRINCIPAL ENEMY OF THE WORKING CLASS AND THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT." THE LSSP WAS CRITICIZED FOR ITS GROWING TENDENCY TO ASSOCIATE WITH THE UNP AND TO PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THE RIGHT WING. ALTHOUGH THE LSSP'S PROPOSED SOCIALIST UNITED FRONT WAS JUDGED "TOO NARROW A CONCEPT TO BE APPROPRIATE TO THE ACTUAL LEVELS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TODAY," THE CP REITERATED THAT IT WAS PREPARED TO "WORK ON A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE BASIS WITH ALL PROGRESSIVE AND LEFT FORCES TO EVOLVE A RADICAL PROGRAMME AND A FIGHTING FRONT OF DEMOCRATIC, RADICAL, AND LEFT FORCES TO COMBAT THE UNP AND THE DISASTROUS

POLICIES OF THE SLFP RIGHT WING."

5. WHILE THE CP INTENDS TO WORK AS AN INDEPENDENT GROUP IN THE NSA, IF IT MEETS AGAIN BEFORE THE STATUTORY DISSOLUTION DATE OF MAY 22, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE STATED THAT THE PARTY WILL SUPPORT GOVERNMENT MEASURES IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY WHICH IT JUDGES TO BE IN "THE INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE."

6. COMMENT. THE CP WITHDRAWAL FROM THE GOVERNMENT IS ANOTHER BLOW, ALTHOUGH NOT A WHOLLY UNEXPECTED ONE, TO PM BANDARANAIKE. THE STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS AND POLICE SHOOTING ON CAMPUS IN NOVEMBER, THE STRIKES IN DECEMBER/ JANUARY, THE FIVE DEFECTIONS FROM HER PARTY EARLIER THIS MONTH, AND NOW THE FINAL SPLINTERING OF HER UNITED FRONT, ARE SIGNS OF HER GRADUAL LOSS OF CONTROL OVER POLITICAL EVENTS. SHE MAINTAINS A MAJORITY IN THE NSA (87 SLFP AND 5 LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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APPOINTED M.P.'S IN AN NSA OF 157) BUT HAS LOST THE POTENTIAL TWO THIRDS MAJORITY SHE ONCE HAD.
REED

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Message Attributes

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